



Linda and Richard Mueller for the Rehabilitation of the Loeb Farm Barn Complex, Marion Township

When Linda and Richard Mueller first encountered the Loeb Farm Barn Complex, commonly known as “Castle Farms,” it was a remnant of the magnificent stone farm complex built by Albert H. Loeb, an early top executive at Sears, Roebuck, and Company. In 1917 and 1918 Loeb conceived of the farm as a model in which agriculture could be practiced with modern business efficiency and as a place in which he could showcase Sears farm implements and equipment. With the death of Albert Loeb and the farm depression of 1927, the Loeb estate decided to close the farm. John Van Haver purchased the property in the 1960s. He changed the name to Castle Van Haver and converted a portion into a foundry for producing aluminum art. In 1969 the property was purchased and renamed Castle Farms. In the mid-1970s a stage structure was constructed at the rear of the cattle barn and became a popular entertainment venue and hosted rock and folk concerts for twenty-two years.

Over the years, individuals and nonprofit organizations tried unsuccessfully to invest in and rehabilitate the structures. The property survived years of hard use and neglect. Then in 2001 Linda and Richard Mueller recognized the potential and value of the once-stately complex. Taking advantage of the federal historic preservation tax credits, they invested over \$10 million in restoring the complex and in rebuilding the additions that were torn down in the 1970s. The project included the reconstruction of a long-missing roof section on the cattle barn, the recreation of the missing cattle barn wings, the rehabilitation of the horse barn and icehouse, and the creation of an entirely new landscape reflecting the pastoral setting of the original farm. Silo roofs were painstakingly reconstructed using the original construction details, the fountain in the inner courtyard was returned to operation, and numerous missing windows and doors were reproduced based on remaining original examples.

The site and its building are once again an events venue, but this time the historic character of the site is a major attraction for the public. The fully rehabilitated facility includes four individual buildings consisting of approximately 40,000 total square feet. Castle Farms now hosts tours, meetings, fundraisers, receptions, reunions, weddings, art and antique markets, craft shows, and more.

Through the vision and dedication of Linda and Richard Mueller a new life has been given to this once deteriorated and threatened historic resource. Michiganians and visitors alike now have an exciting new opportunity to visit and enjoy one of our state’s most unique architectural treasures.

Architect: AZD Associates

Contractor: Lazer Construction

Historic Preservation in Michigan

